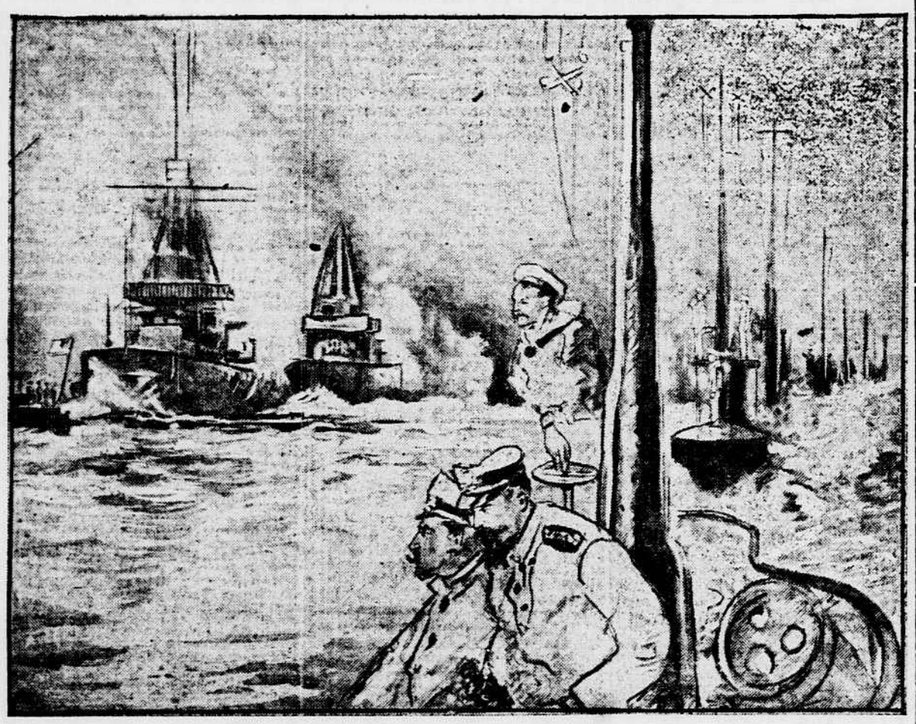
DANGER!!—Being the Log of Capt. John Sirius—By SIR A. CONAN DOYLE

A Novelette of Extraordinary Timely Interest, Written Just Before the Opening of the Present Great War, and Showing How Great Britain Was (in Fiction) Starved Into Submission by a Submarine Campaign Like the One Officially Declared by Germany, Beginning Feb. 18.

Conan Doyle Is One of England's Most Active Literary Defenders, and His Striking Story "DANGER" Was Evidently Written to Warn the British Government to Provide Some Effective Measures to Meet the Difficulties of Such an Attack on the Sources of Great Britain's Food Supply.

The culmination of the tale printed today in conclusion of the previous installment points out the significant moral of Conan Doyle's prophecy.

The story deals with a conflict between a minor European nation—presumably Holland, although not distinctly so stated—and Great Britain. The minor nation was about to yield to an ultimatum when Capt. John Sirius, who is in command of a small submarine fleet, objected and proposed to settle matters by a submarine campaign similar to that now waged by Germany. The story related by Capt. Sirius tells of operating off the mouth of the Thames and torpedoing one merchant vessel after another, British and neutral alike. As for the rights of neutrals, he says, the lawyers can settle all that after the war. The culmination of his success is when he sinks the queenly Olympic of the White Star line. He then makes a rendezvous with Panza, who has been operating off the mouth of the Solent.



We returned to port upon the surface, steaming through the whole British fleet as we passed up the North Sea. The crews clustered thick along the sides of the vessels to watch us.

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Panza's report was excellent. They had come round by the Pentland Firth and reached their cruising ground on the fourth day. Already they had destroyed twenty vessels without any mishap. I ordered the Beta to divide her oil and torpedoes among the other three, so that they were in good condition to continue their cruise. Then the Beta and I headed for home, reaching our base upon Sunday, April 25. Off Cape Wrath I picked up a paper from a small schooner.

"Wheat, 84; maize, 60; barley, 62." What were battles and bombardments compared to that!

The whole coast of Norland was closely blockaded by cordon within cordon and every port, even the smallest, held by the British. But why should they suspect my modest confectioner's villa more than any other of the 10,000 houses that face the sea? I was glad when I picked up its homely white front in my periscope. That night I landed and found my stores intact. Before morning the Beta reported itself, for we had the windows lit as a guide.

It is not for me to recount the messages which I found waiting for me at my humble headquarters. They shall ever remain as the patents of nobility of my family. Among others was that never-to-be-forgotten salutation from my king. He desired me to present myself at Hauptville, but for once I took it upon myself to disobey his commands. It took me two days, or rather two nights, for we sank ourselves during the daylight hours—to get all our stores on board, but my presence was needful every minute of the time. On the third morning at 4 o'clock the Beta and my own little flagship were at sea once more, bound for our original station off the mouth of the Thames.

I had no time to read our papers while I was refitting, but I gathered the news after we got under way. The British occupied all our ports, but otherwise we had not suffered at all, since we have excellent railway communications with Europe. Prices had altered little and our industries continued as before. There was talk of a British invasion, but this I knew to be absolute nonsense, for the British must have learned by this time that it would be sheer murder to send transports full of soldiers to sea in the face of submarines. When they have a tunnel they can use their fine expeditionary force upon the continent, but until then it might just as well not exist so far as Europe is concerned. My own country therefore was in good case and had nothing to fear.

Great Britain, however, was already feeling my grip upon her throat. As in normal times four-fifths of her food is imported, prices were rising by leaps and bounds. The supplies in the country were beginning to show signs of depletion, while little was coming in to replace them. The insurance at Lloyd's had risen to a figure which made the price of food prohibitive to the mass of the people by the time it had reached the market. The loaf which under ordinary circumstances stood at fivepence was already at one and two pence. Beef was three shillings and fourpence a pound and mutton two shillings and ninepence. Everything else was in proportion. The government had acted with energy and offered a big bounty for corn to be planted at once. It could only be reaped five months hence, however, and long before then, as the papers pointed out, half the island would be dead from starvation.

Strong appeals had been made to the patriotism of the people and they were assured that the interference with trade was temporary and that with a little patience all would be well. Bu already there was a marked rise in the death rate, especially among children, who suffered from want of milk, the cattle being slaughtered for food. There was serious rioting in the Lanarkshire coal fields and in the Midlands, together with a socialistic upheaval in the east of London which had assumed the proportions of a civil war. Already there were responsible papers which declared that England was in an impossible position and that an immediate peace was necessary to prevent one of the greatest tragedies in history. It was my task now to prove to them that they were right.

It was May 2 when I found myself back at the Maplin Sands to the north of the estuary of the Thames. The Beta was sent on to the Solent to block it and take the place of the lamented Kappa. And now I was throttling Britain indeed—London, Southampton, the Bristol channel, Liverpool, the North channel, the Glasgow approaches, each was guarded by my boats. Great liners were, as we learned afterward, pouring their supplies into Galway and the west of Ireland, where provisions were cheaper than has ever been known. Tens of thousands were embarking from Britain for Ireland in order to save themselves from starvation. But you cannot transplant a whole dense population. The main body of the people by the middle of May were actually starving. At that date wheat was at 100, maize and barley at 80. Even the most obstinate had begun to see that the situation could not possibly continue.

In the great towns starving crowds clamored for bread before the municipal offices, and public officials everywhere were attacked and often murdered by frantic mobs, composed largely of desperate women who had seen their infants perish before their eyes. In the country roots, bark and weeds of every sort were used as food. In London the private mansions of ministers were guarded by strong pickets of soldiers, while a battalion of guards was camped permanently round the Houses of Parliament. The lives of the prime minister and of the foreign secretary were continually threatened and occasionally attempted.

Yet the government had entered upon the war with the full assent of every party in the state. The true culprits were those, be they politicians or journalists, who had not the foresight to understand that unless Britain grew her own supplies, or unless by means of a tunnel she had some way of conveying them into the island, all her mighty expenditure upon her army and her fleet was a mere waste of money so long as her antagonist had a few submarines and men who could use them. England has often been stupid, but has got off scot free.

This time she was stupid and had to pay the price. You can't expect luck to be your savior always.

It would be a mere repetition of what I have already described if I were to recount all our proceedings during that first ten days after I resumed my station. During my absence the ships had taken heart and had begun to come up again. In the first day I got four. After that I had to go further afield, and again I picked up several in French waters. Once I had a narrow escape through one of my Kingston valves getting some grit into it and refusing to act when I was below the surface. Our margin of buoyancy just carried us through. By the end of that week the channel was clear again, and both Beta and my own boat were down west once more. There we had encouraging messages from our Bristol consort, who in turn had heard from Delta at Liverpool.

Our task was completely done. We could not prevent all food from passing into the British Islands, but at least we had raised what did get in to a price which put it far beyond the means of the penniless, workless multitude. In vain government commandeered it all and doled it out as a general feeds the garrison of a fortress. The task was too great—the responsibility too horrible. Even the proud and stubborn English could not face it any longer.

I remember well how the news came to me. I was lying at the time off Selsey Bill when I saw a small war vessel coming down channel. It had never been my policy to attack any vessel coming down. My torpedoes and even my shells were too precious for that. I could not help being attracted, however, by the movements of this ship, which came slowly zigzagging in my direction.

"Looking for me," thought I. "What on earth does the foolish thing hope to do if she could find me?"

I was lying awash at the time and got ready to go below in case she should come for me. But at that moment—she was about half a mile away—she turned her quarter, and there, to my amazement, was the red flag with the blue circle, our own beloved flag, flying from her peak. For a moment I thought that this was some clever dodge of the enemy to tempt me within range. I snatched up my glasses and called on Vornal. Then we both recognized the vessel. It was the Juno, the only one left intact of our own cruisers. What could she be doing flying the flag in the enemy's waters? Then I understood it, and, turning to Vornal, we threw ourselves into each other's arms. It could only mean an armistice—or peace!

And it was peace. We learned the glad news when we had risen alongside the Juno and the ringing cheers which greeted us had at last died away. Our orders were to report ourselves at once at Blankenberg. Then she passed on down channel to collect the others. We returned to port upon the surface, steaming through the whole British fleet as we passed up the North sea. The crews clustered thick along the sides of the vessels to watch us. I can see now their sullen, angry faces. Many shook their fists and cursed us as we went by. It was not that we had damaged them—I will do them the justice to say that the English, as the old Boer war has proved, bear no resentment against a brave enemy—but that they thought us cowardly to attack merchant ships and avoid the warships. It is like the Arabs, who think that a flank attack is a mean, unmanly device.

War is not merely a big game, my English friends. It is a desperate business to gain the upper hand, and one must use one's brain in order to find the weak spot of one's enemy.

It is not fair to blame me if I have found yours. It was my duty. Perhaps those officers and sailors who scowled at the little Iota that May morning have by this time done me justice when the first bitterness of undeserved defeat was past.

Let others describe my entrance into Blankenberg; the mad enthusiasm of the crowds and the magnificent public reception of each successive boat as it arrived. Surely the men deserved the grant made them by the state, which has enabled each of them to be independent for life. As a feat of endurance that long residence in such a state of mental tension in cramped quarters, breathing an unnatural atmosphere, will long remain as a record. The country may well be proud of such sailors.

The terms of peace were not made onerous, for we were in no condition to make Great Britain our permanent enemy. We knew well that we had won the war by circumstances which would never be allowed to occur again, and that in a few years the island power would be as strong as ever—stronger, perhaps—for the lesson that she has learned. It would be madness to provoke such an antagonist. A mutual salute of flags was arranged, the colonial boundary was adjusted by arbitration, and we claimed no indemnity beyond an undertaking on the part of Britain that she would pay any damages which an international court might award to France or to the United States for injury received through the operations of our submarines. So ended the war.

Of course, England will not be caught napping in such a fashion again! Her foolish blindness is partly explained by her delusion that her enemy would not torpedo merchant vessels. Common sense should have told her enemy would play the game that suited them best—that they would not inquire what they could do, but they would do it first and talk about it afterward. The opinion of the whole world now is that if a blockade were proclaimed one might do what one could with those who tried to break it, and it was as reasonable to prevent food from reaching England in war time as it would be for a besieger to prevent the victualing of a beleaguered fortress.

I cannot end this account better than by quoting the first few paragraphs of a leader in the Times, which appeared shortly after the declaration of peace. It may be taken to epitomize the saner public opinion of England upon the meaning and lessons of the episode:

"In all this miserable business," said the writer, "which has cost us the loss of a considerable portion of our merchant fleet, and more than fifty thousand civilian lives, there is just one consolation to be found. It lies in the fact that our temporary conqueror is a power which is not strong enough to reap the fruits of her victory.

"Had we endured this humiliation at the hands of any of the first-class powers it would certainly have entailed the loss of all our crown colonies and tropical possessions, besides the payment of a huge indemnity. We were absolutely at the feet of our conqueror, and no possible alternative but to submit to her terms, however onerous. Norland has the good sense to understand that she must not abuse her temporary advantage and has been generous in her dealings. In the grip of any other power we should have ceased to exist as an empire.

"Even now we are not out of the wood. Some one may maliciously pick a quarrel with us before we get our house in order and use the easy weapon which has been demonstrated. It is to meet such a contingency that the government has rushed enormous stores of food at the public expense into the country. In a very few months the new harvest will have appeared. On the whole, we can face the immediate future without undue depression, though there remain some causes for anxiety. These will no doubt be energetically handled by this new and efficient government which has taken the place of those discredited politicians who led us into a war without having foreseen how helpless we were against an obvious form of attack.

"Already the lines of our reconstruction are evident. The first and most important is that our party men realize that there is something more vital than their academic disputes about free trade or protection, and that all theory must give way to the fact that a country is in an artificial and dangerous condition if she does not produce within her own borders sufficient food at least to keep life in her population. Whether this should be brought about by a tax upon foreign foodstuffs, or by a bounty upon home products, or by a combination of the two, is now under discussion.

"But all parties are combined upon the principle, and, though it will undoubtedly entail either a rise in prices or a deterioration in quality in the food of the working classes, they will at least be insured against so terrible a visitation as that which is fresh in our memories. At any rate, we have got past the stage of argument. It must be so. The increased prosperity of the farming interest, and, as we will hope, the cessation of agricultural immigration, will be benefits to be counted against the obvious disadvantages.

"The second lesson is the immediate construction of not one, but two, double-lined railways under the channel. We stand in a white sheet over the matter, since the project has always been discouraged in these columns, but we are prepared to admit that had such railway communication been combined with adequate arrangements for forwarding supplies from Marseille we should have avoided our recent surrender. We still insist that we cannot trust entirely to a tunnel, since our enemy might have allies in the Mediterranean, but in a single contest with any power in the north of Europe it would certainly be of inestimable benefit.

"There may be dangers attendant upon the existence of a tunnel, but it must now be admitted that they are trivial compared to those which come from its absence. As to the building of large fleets of merchant submarines for the carriage of food, that is a new departure which will be an additional insurance against the danger which has left so dark a page in the history of our country."

(The End.)

THE EVENING STORY.

The Neighborhood Club.

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It was Mrs. Tabor's idea. Mrs. Tabor was a leading spirit everywhere. If she lived in a bigger town than Westmore she would have become the champion and organizer of women to an extent that would have given her national renown. As it was, she was much restricted. But she did what she could.

After the holidays, when the winter began to grow dull, she proposed to Helen Morse that they organize a neighborhood club. Helen Morse was engaged to Len Tabor, and she thought his mother was about perfect. They talked the scheme over one whole afternoon. There was no end to the good times a neighborhood club was capable of. They could have cards, music, readings, and "eats," of course. Helen suggested that. She said no gathering was worthy the name without refreshments. Mrs. Tabor conceded that point and the plan went merrily toward a finish.

"We'll call everybody," said Mrs. Tabor; "I mean everybody on this street. This street is our real neighborhood. I hadn't thought of turning corners. If we begin to turn corners there's no end to it. There's sixteen families on this street. That makes forty people—a good big houseful every time. You can't get a dozen folks together and expect to have much of a time. And as far as I know we're all just as congenial as if we were one family."

"Mrs. Burder—" Helen began.

"Mrs. Burder!" Mrs Tabor received the name like a slight dose of electricity. "Goodness me! I'd forgotten all about her."

"I thought you had," said Helen, quietly. "She lives in the neighborhood, you know. She lives on this street."

"Right next to you! But that makes no difference. We can't have her, can we? She doesn't belong, as Len says."

"No, she assuredly doesn't belong," Helen replied, smiling.

When in the fading afternoon she left Mrs. Tabor's the date was set for the first meeting. Helen walked quickly through the sharp air. As she turned in toward her own door she saw a woman kneeling in the hard snow, peering under the veranda. An old rag of shawl had half slipped from her gray head.

"Lost anything, Mrs. Burder?" she called, cheerily.

The woman looked back over her shoulder. "It's my little kitty," she said. "I've only had him two days. He's got away under your veranda here, I can just see him, but he won't come out. And I'm afeered he'll chill."

"Get up," Helen said. "You'll get your death in that snow. I'll run in and get a bit of fresh meat. That will coax him out. Wait just a minute."

She ran into the house and back again breathlessly with the meat. Stooping down she flung a bit toward

SHE WAS PEERING UNDER THE VERANDA.

the kitten, then another bit. In a moment or two the hungry creature emerged and Mrs. Burder had him in her arms. Tears were on her thin, wrinkled cheeks. Helen stared at her in surprise. She never had dreamed that the woman could show so much feeling. As she re-entered the house she saw Mrs. Burder hurrying into hers. She had taken off her shawl and wrapped the kitten in it.

Helen wondered about it. When the house next door had become so run down that it would not rent or sell to self-respecting folk the Burders had moved in. There were two of the Burders, man and wife. He was a big, glowering blacksmith; she a tiny, weazened wisp of a woman, silent and sour. They brought with them a disreputable-looking mess of furniture and the house soon appeared worse than ever. It was a disgrace to the street, everybody said. And as for the inmates, the blight of them was enough. Nobody cared for closer acquaintance.

Now that this fresh knowledge of Mrs. Burder had been thrust upon Helen she wondered if there was not more to the woman than she had suspected. A woman who cries over the recovery of a mere kitten cannot be all bad. She felt uncomfortably that she had failed in her Christian duty to a neighbor. For the woman was her neighbor. She could not get around that fact.

But other things soon drove all thought of Mrs. Burder out of Helen's head. The first meeting of the Neighborhood Club was a success. Another meeting was arranged for at Helen's house. She spent a great deal of time in planning for it. She loved to play hostess, and she really presided over her father's house with a grace that would have done credit to a much older woman.

It was the morning after the second meeting. Helen was clearing up the litter. There had been cake and cream

IT TOOK ME BACK TO MY YOUNG DAYS.

and sandwiches and coffee. A lot of cake was left. An idea came to Helen. She would take some cake to Mrs. Burder. She filled a silver cake basket, covered it all with a monogramed dolly and ran across lots with it. Her first knock brought no response. But her second was followed by a faint "Come in." Helen entered. Upon a thin, old lounge in the front room lay Mrs. Burder. The kitten crept under her hand.

"Oh, it's you!" she said.

"I've brought you some cake," Helen said, setting the basket on the table.

The woman's eyes brightened. "Thank you. I saw you had some doings over to your house last night. I heard the music and the laughing. I heard somebody singing. Uncle Laurie.' Let me tell you what I did. I went over and stood under the window. It was 'most as good as being inside."

Helen caught her breath. "Then you took cold?"

"Not a mite. I'm weatherproof, I guess."

"What ails you then? Sick—headache?"

Mrs. Burder shook her head. "No'm. I never have that, either. Don't nothing ail me—only lack of gumption. I expect I'm just letting go."

"Letting go—of what?" Helen questioned.

"Of everything. They ain't no reason for me to hang on. Say, do you know when I heard that young fellow—he's your fellow, ain't he?—singing 'Annie Laurie' last night it took me back to my young days?"

"Tell me about them," Helen urged softly. She reached over and took the thin, worn hand nearest her.

There was a moment's silence and then the woman began lifelessly. "Well, I was real kind of pretty, they said. And, would you believe it, I had 'most everything I wanted, for my folks was well off? Then I married Keen Burder." She paused. "I ain't got nothing more to say about that. I thought once, though, two or three years afterward, I was going to be happy in spite of everything. That was when my boy came. I was just certain there for a while. Then he died. He was only five. And something died with him. I lost interest, and I kept on losing it, until now it don't seem I've got any call to keep going. My God, what is there for me to live for?" She brought herself back from the verge of further revelation and looked at Helen with her faded eyes. "That's pretty talk for me to make before a young lady like you, ain't it? I ought to know better," she said. She sat up. The kitten moved and she patted it gently. "Cunning little fellow," she said. "He came to me. Seemed like he knew I needed something." Loneliness, ancient heart hunger, soul destitution spoke in the words.

Helen's eyes were full of tears. Impulsively she plunged. In a few words she had told the whole story of the Neighborhood Club. "And I want you to join. I want you to come to the next meeting—you and your husband both."

"I don't mean it?" Mrs. Burder gasped. Her skinny throat quivered. "If I thought it'd keep Burder out of the saloon nights I'd be minded to try it." There was a glimmer of hope in her face.

"I'll have my father talk to him," said Helen. "But, remember, Mrs. Burder, you must come, anyway."

Half an hour later she was telling the whole story to Mrs. Tabor.

"Good land, we must be heathen at heart!" Mrs. Tabor said. "Helen, you've got more sense than any of us. I'll go right over and see that poor creature this very afternoon. And I'll take her a glass of my grape jelly. I'll tell you what, Helen. We'll give the Neighborhood Club some purpose besides having a good time. We'll make it look after all our neighbors like Mrs. Burder. And I don't care how many corners we turn!" cried Mrs. Tabor, earnestly.

(THE END.)

ALECK ROSS WINS OUT.

Beats Ouimet by Three Strokes in Big Golf Event at Pinehurst.

PINEHURST, N. C., March 29.—Alexander Ross of the Pinehurst Country Club won the open event of the fifteenth annual United North and South amateur golf championship Saturday, with a card of 146, defeating Francis Ouimet, national amateur champion, who made 149, and Walter Hagan, national open champion, with 150.

Ouimet virtually lost his chance of winning the match by taking eight strokes on the first hole in the morning round. In the afternoon he broke the amateur record for No. 2 course, with a card of 70.

Jesse Guilford of Manchester, N. H., was next to Ouimet among the amateurs. Walter J. Travis did not return a card.